The Little Creature

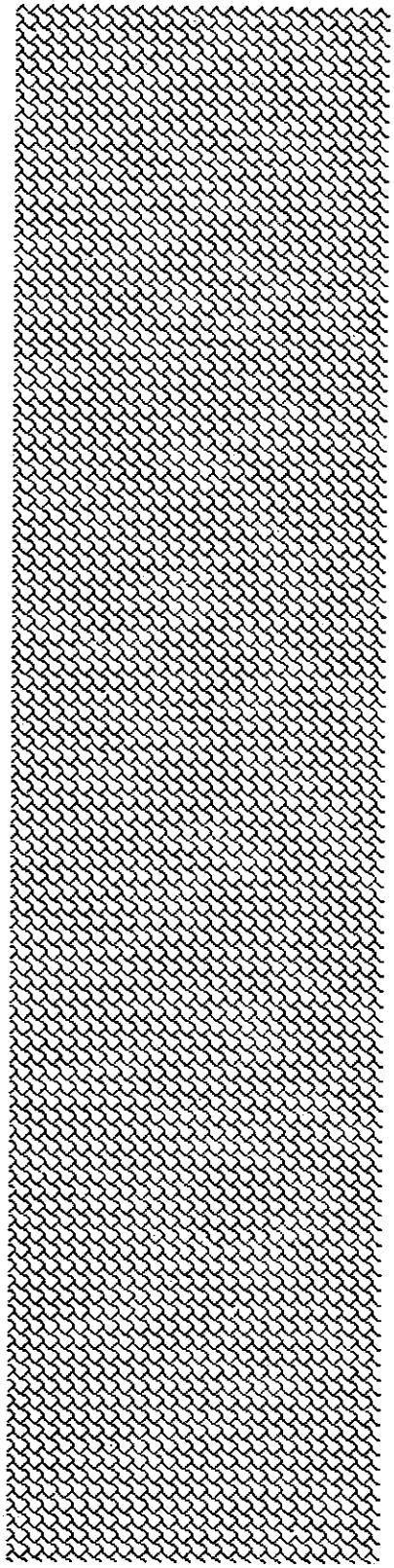
A Sign of Allah

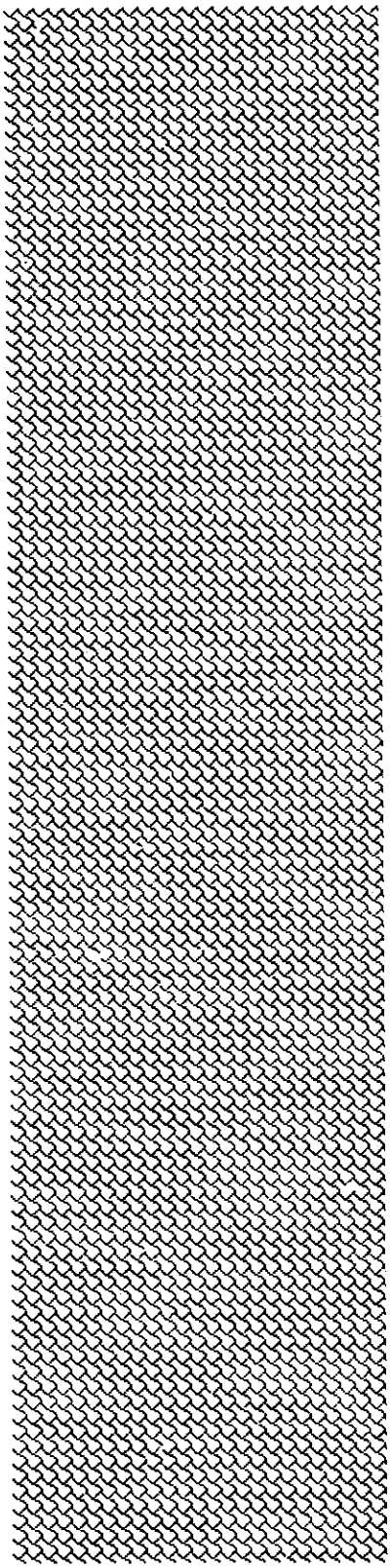
Dr. Shamsul Islam Farooqi (Alig.)

Foreword

The significance of children's literature has immensely increased during the present times. Such books should be prepared for small children that narrate stories and epics. Through these Qur'anic teachings, Hadiths and wisdom should be conveyed to them. Children read these with interest so as to have an impact on their minds. Writers connected with Islamic Movement have laid emphasis on this aspect and produced valuable literature. Dr. Shamsul Islam Farooqi also belongs to the same category of writers. He has produced several books on scientific topics, keeping in view the mental status of children. The present book belongs to the same series.

Qur'an has an accout of honey bee. It narrates how the bee builds its hive and sucks juice from flowers. It prepares a tasty syrup out of it that cures diseases of human beings. For those who minutely observe things, Allah Taala calls bee's life





as His sign. The writer has elaborated these aspects in this booklet. It is hoped that children will read the story with interest, enjoy it and have its impact on their minds.

May Allah reward the writer for his efforts and widely spread its benefits. (Ameen).

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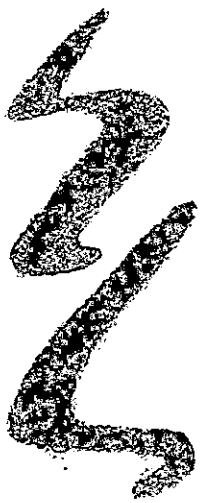
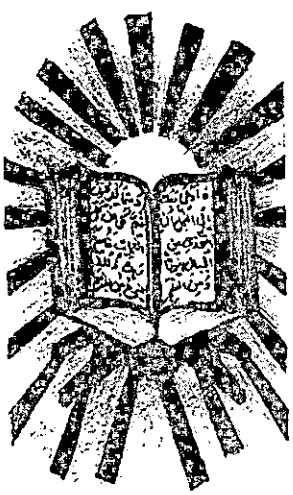
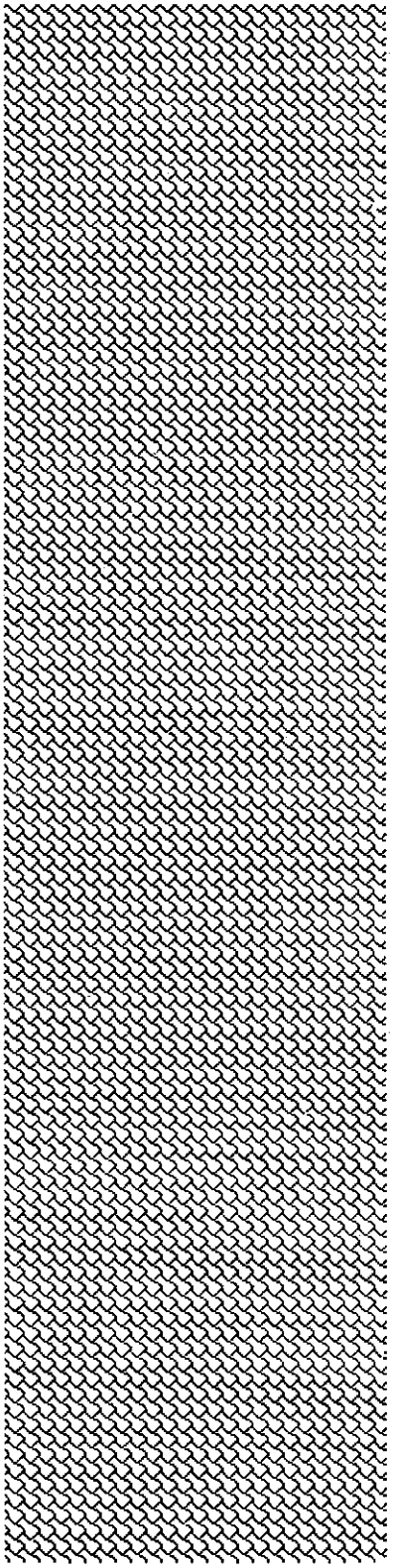


For spending their summer vocations, Aiman and Ameen had come to Srinagar alongwith their Dada Abbu. Their Great Pa used to reside here. His daughter Shifa was their fast friend. Shifa was eldest and was now in seventh standard. Aiman was a little younger while Ameen who was their cousin was the youngest. Inspite of age difference, they were quite close to one another. This was the reason because of which Aiman and Ameen loved visiting Srinagar. They used to enjoy a lot here. Sunday was a holiday for Aiman's Great Pa. It was decided to prepare breakfast and then go to Botanical Gardens and enjoy it there in open space and pleasurable atmosphere.



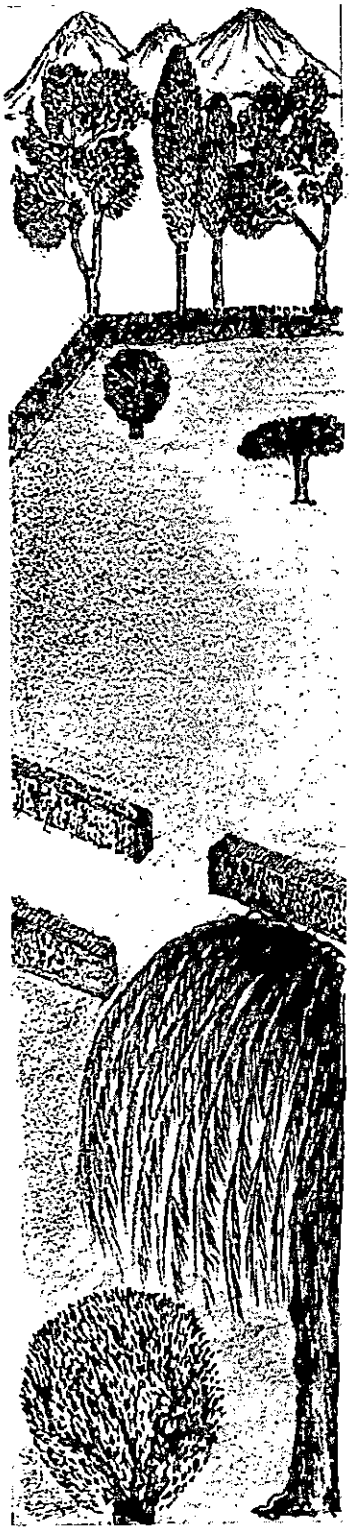
Shifa's Dada Abbu was in the habit of giving a Qur'anic lesson in the morning of every Sunday to all the



family members. That day also inspite of having a programme to go out, he managed his usual lesson. However he cut it short unlike the usual ones. When every body gathered, he recited Aya No. 68 and 69 of Surah Nahel and gave a brief explanation of the same.

In these Aya there was an account of the honey bee, about which several informations were provided. It was told that those who minutely absorve things, these prove to be Allah's signs. Because only a simple translation of Ayas was narrated without any details, several questions were striking the children's mind. For instance does Allah Taala reveal Vahi to living things like honey bees? Does honey bee built its hive only on those places which have been indicated in Qur'an? Which are the trodden paths of Allah which the honey bee is ordered to follow? How it sucks juice of fruits and flowers and prepares honey out of it? What is that multicoloured syrup that comes out of honey bee and cures diseases of human beings? These were the questions of which, each child was desirous to know the answer. Because that day there was a programme of going out, *Dada Abba* had cut short the lesson but promised to provide many useful informations to elaborate this topic.

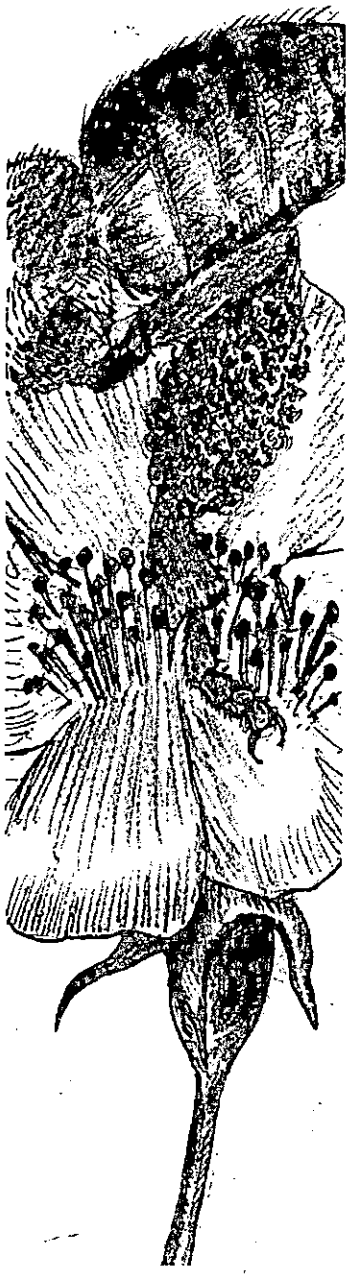
When lesson was over, all hurriedly kept the outing kits into the car and drove to the botanical garden which was not far away from the house. Every lawn of this garden was well maintained and lush green. All sat by spreading a sheat near a flower-bed. Lawns of botanical garden were extraordinarily vast. It appeared as if every where there were green carpets. Vastness is characteristic of this place. Even if large number of people visit this place, one does not feel it to be crowded. The place appears so private that every one present over there feels as if he is in a portion of his own house. Besides big lawns and innumerable flower beds, there were different types of trees as well; whose maintenance was worth seeing. Trees of chinar, almond and walnut add to the beauty of this place. This extremely vast garden was surrounded from all sides by high green mountains, giving it a scenic beauty. Inside the garden, there was a huge lake also, where boats could be hired and one would enjoy boating. Within the lake, there were high springing fountains which add to its beauty. After spending few hours over there, one feels himself fresh and free from all types of tensions and tiredness.



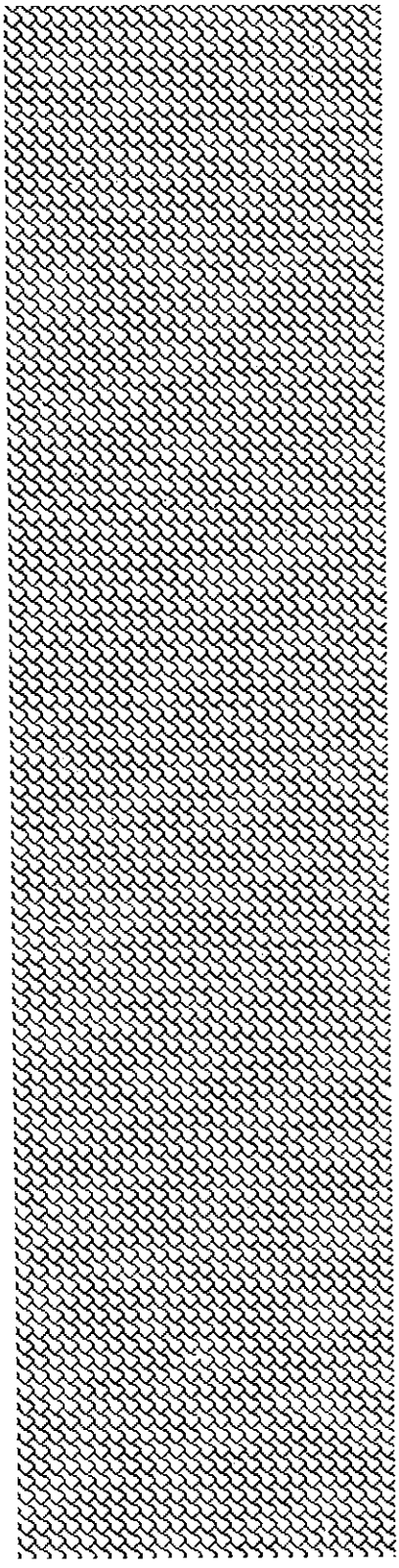
After taking a delicious breakfast,

children started roaming about here and there. While roaming, they reached to a site where there were huge beds of roses. They were of innumerable varieties, colours and shades. Out of these, black roses had an exceptional attraction. They were so delightful that one would like looking them again and again. As a matter of fact, the colour of these roses was red but was so deep that appeared almost black. As they were looking these roses, they heard a buzzing sound. They saw and found a honey bee hovering over an extremely beautiful and fresh flower. Morning lesson of Qur'an was quite fresh in their minds and now when they came cross a honey bee, they became inquisitive and started starring at it. The honey bee very softly landed in the centre of the flower and then inserted its head deep in the bottom of the flower. It remained there for sometime, then lifted its head and flew to land again on another flower and repeated the same action. Children continued to observe the bee activity but after some time, they felt that there was not that single bee alone but a large number of bees visiting the flowers and performing the same function. Each one would go to a flower, do something after inserting its head deep into the flower and then leave to go elsewhere in order to repeat the same. During this process, the

children witnessed another bee which after sitting on the flower started moving its hind legs rather quickly. These legs were comparatively more flattened, with long dense hairs on them. On account of leg movement, some powdery substance coming out from the stalk like structures present at the centre of flower and got entangled in the hairy portion of the legs. They observed several such bees but only few of them were having large bunches of powdery substance on their hind legs. Children made this observation with great interest but this also proved to be like the morning lesson of Qur'an. It was difficult for them to understand the bees activity and needed the help of their *Dada Abbu* who at present was lying down and enjoying the sun.



After some times, when children returned after a stroll in the garden, all started back for the home. On their way, children told about their experience to *Dada Abbu*. They desired to know the explanation of Qur'anic Ayah recited in the morning and also of the observations they made in the botanical garden. *Dada Abbu* had some important engagement during the day so he asked them to wait till night. He promised not only to explain the Qur'anic Ayah but would make them understand their morning observations at



the Botanical Gardens also.

Children were really too much interested in the honey bees and were finding it difficult to spend time. Some how the night fell and they all gathered after the dinner. Aiman could hardly hold herself and very impatiently asked:

"*Dada Abbu*! Now you please let us know about the honey bee whose account was there in Qur'an and incidently we also got a chance to observe their activities in the Botanical Garden."

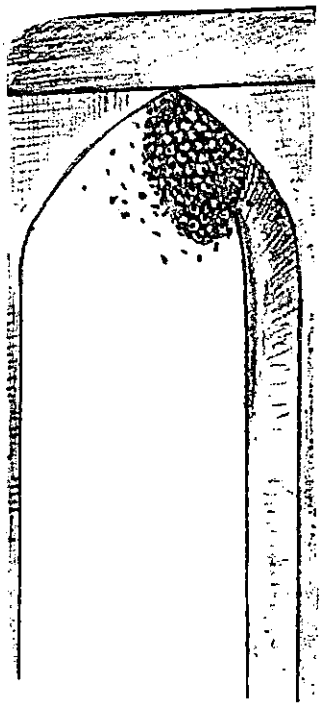
Dada Abbu was very happy to see their interest. He said:

"I am very happy to note that you are so eager to unfold the sign of Allah. I will surely let you know many things about honey bees which will make you to understand the Qur'ainic Ayah and you will also clarify your own observations. It is better we start our talk about bees in the same sequence as they appeared in Qur'an." Said *Dada Abbu*.

"That's right, then first you tell us how a *Vahi* (revelation) is possible to a bee. As we understand, it is meant only for the messengers of Allah." Shifa asked.

"Well it is like putting something in one's heart. Maulana Azad and Maulana Mohammad Shafi in their translations of Qur'an have used words other than *Vahi*. Think about yourself. Doing something is

only possible when it comes to your heart and coming to the heart is not automatic. It comes only when some one puts it. Think about a man. What is he? Simply an assemblage of minute pieces of flesh, the cells which can neither speak nor have brains. However when their creator orders, they start thinking but man thinks he is doing this on his own. Similarly a honey bee is nothing in itself but when Allah puts something in its heart, it starts doing accordingly. This is referred to as Vahi or revealation to the bee. Does any one remeınbers the first order given to the bee by Allah in the Ayah recited in the morning."



"Yes *Dada Abbu*! The bee was asked to go and make hives at different places." Aiman replied quickly.

"Absolutely correct! Allah asks the bee to go and build houses in mountains, trees and vines on small dwellings.[1]

"This means the honey bee builds its houses only on those places which have been mentioned in Qur'an." Shifa questioned.

"Yes of course. But being a student of Entomology, I give some additional meanings also which may or may not be correct."

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[1] وَاَوۡحٰى رَبُّكَ اِلَى النَّحۡلِ اَنِ اتَّخِذِىۡ مِنَ الۡجِبَالِ بُيُوۡتًا وَّمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعۡرِشُوۡنَ ﴿۶۸﴾ (النحل:68)

"*Dada Abbu*! Please let us know what other meanings could also be taken?" Aiman asked.

"I feel that each place indicated in Qur'an refers to a particular species of honey bee. Apparantly there are nine species of honey bees in the world, out of which only four are honey yielding. First one is called Apis dorsata which is about 25-30-cms large. It makes houses only in open spaces of mountains or high buildings like arches of mosques. Those bees can not be domesticated and are very dangerous. If a person gets stung by several bees, it could be fatal. Second and third species are called Apis cerana and Apis millifera respectively which are 18-20 cms large. They make houses in hidden places on trees and can never build openly in mountains or high buildings. Both these species are domesticated to get honey out of them. Last or the fourth species is called Apis florea. It is only 12-15 cms large and yields very little amount of honey and can not be domesticated also. It builds houses on vines climbing on small dwellings. By looking at the association of bee species with places we presume as if Allah has not only pointed out the places for house building but has also indicated the particular species of honey bee also."

After listening to this, Shifa said:

"In fact your thinking could be true also. But don't you think that these are the trodden paths, along which Allah has ordered the bee to go and build its houses?"

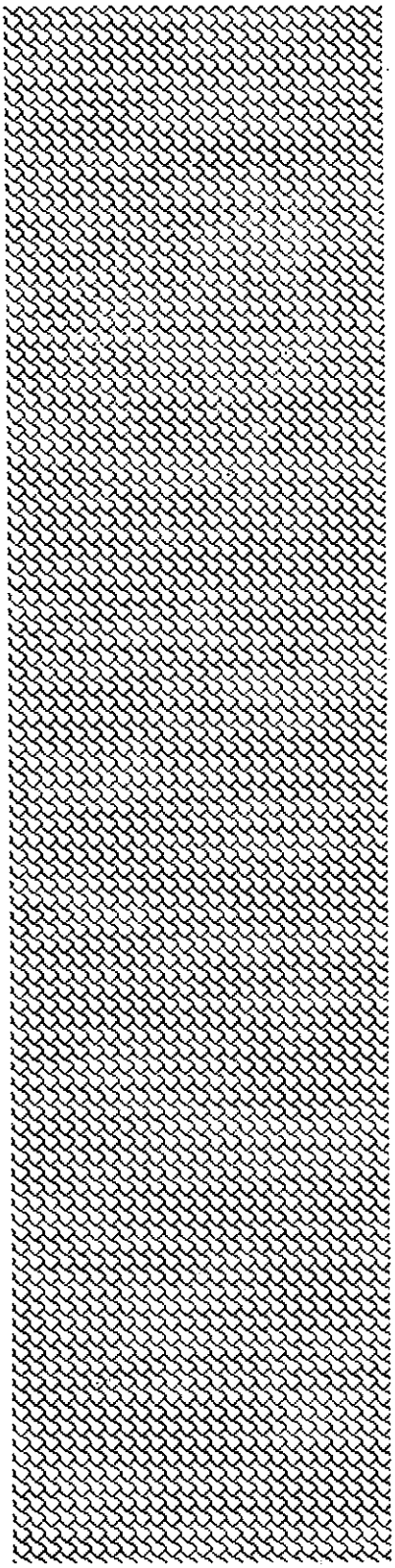
"You are right but this being only a small portion of that. As a matter of fact, Allah's paths refer to the whole life system of the honey bee. This not only include places for building houses but also various other bee functions such as searching food and conveying about its presence to the fellow bees, sucking juice and preparing honey out of it, storing the same or feeding it to the queen and larvae and distributing various functions within themselves."

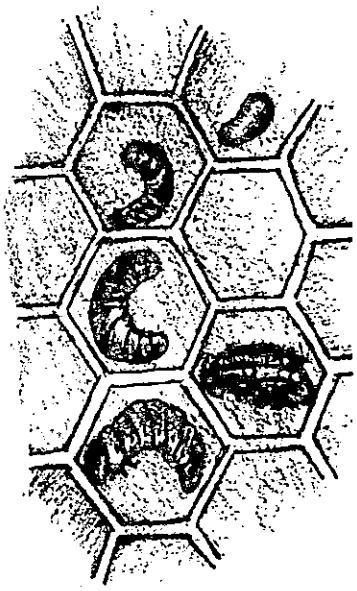
"*Dada Abbu*, these informations are not only interesting but unique also. Why not you tell about them in more details." Shifa requested. With this both Aimen and Ameen came closer to *Dada Abbu* as they were enjoying listening about the honey bee.

Realizing their Keen interest, *Dada Abbu* started saying:

"Within a bee hive, there are about 50,000 to 80,000 honey bees, out of which only one bee is capable of laying eggs and it is refered to as the queen bee."

"Are all of them offsprings of that bee as they are born from its eggs only." Aiman asked surprisingly.



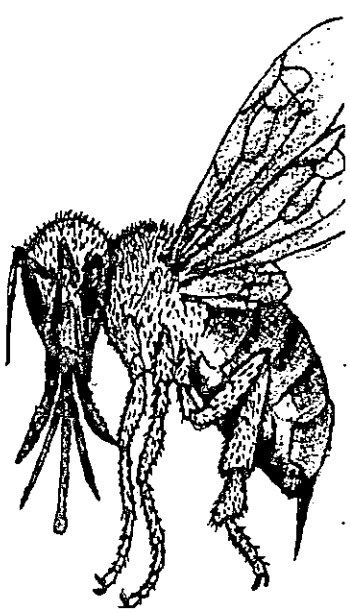


"As compared to other bees, the queen is of a bigger size and posseses extraordinary ability to lay eggs. All bees present in a hive are its offsprings. In the beginning, it lays several thousand eggs each day."

"What do you mean by saying, "in the beginning"?" asked Aiman.

"In the begining when it gets separated from its parent hive and starts building her own. It is accompanied with just few workers and male bees. In order to make the hive big, it has to lay more eggs."

"What are these male bees?"

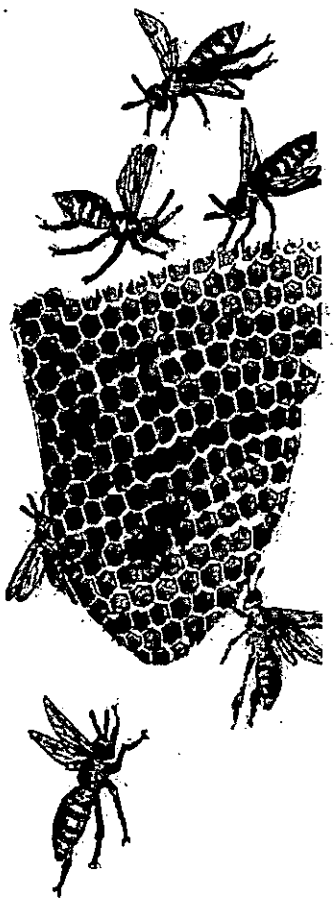


"In every hive, there are three casts namely worker, males and queen. Worker bees are in maximum numbers, male bees few and queen only one. Male bees are slightly larger than workers and are called Drones. After a little while, I will let you know their function in a hive. They are required only when the new hive has to be built. Males don't do any work and simply remain in the hive. Till food is sufficient, they are allowed to live otherwise worker bees kill them. Queen is single in a hive but when the hive grows to a miximum size a need arises to divide it into several new ones, then several queens are born. As a matter of fact, the birth of queens and male bees takes place at the time of need

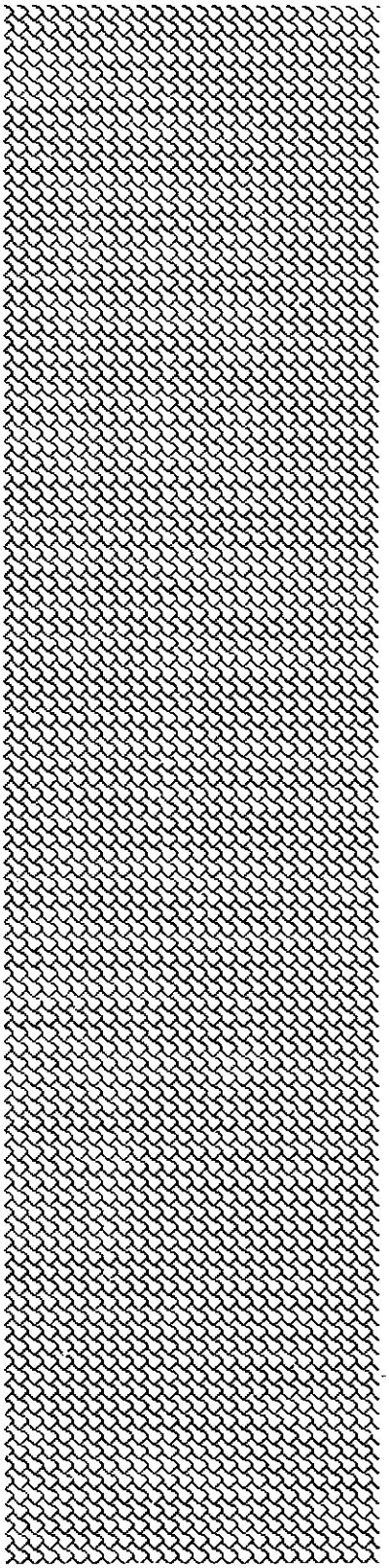
only."

"*Dada Abbu* this is rather astonishimg. Is it possible that the honey bee according to its own will makes the birth of different casts possible and that too when the necessity arises?" Shifa asked surprisingly.

"Not the will of honey bee but say it is the will of Allah. First of all, you understand the reasons due to which the necessity arises to produce individuals of different casts in a hive. As a matter of fact, worker bees are needed to carry out different functions in the hive till the later is small. After it attains a maximum size, it needs to be divided into small units. Each small unit grows into a full hive and this being a natural way of propagation. These smaller units can not be separated and grow unless accompanied by an egg-laying queen. This being the reason why several queens are produced in a hive. Thus the number of queens produced will indicate the number of smaller units which may be formed out of a big hive. Each queen will take away few workers and male bees and start building its own hive." *Dada Abbu* explained in detail.



"We have understood the need of queens and worker bees in a hive but how about the drones. You did not tell their function." Asked Shifa.



"Have a little patience. Soon you will come to know about their needs also. Allah has granted a remarkable ability to queen to lay two types of eggs. One which are fertilized and are copable of producing queens and worker bees and second unfertilized eggs which can produce only male bees."

"*Dada Abbu* this is really astonishing and very much susprising that the same queen gives two types of eggs. How it can happen?" asked Aiman.

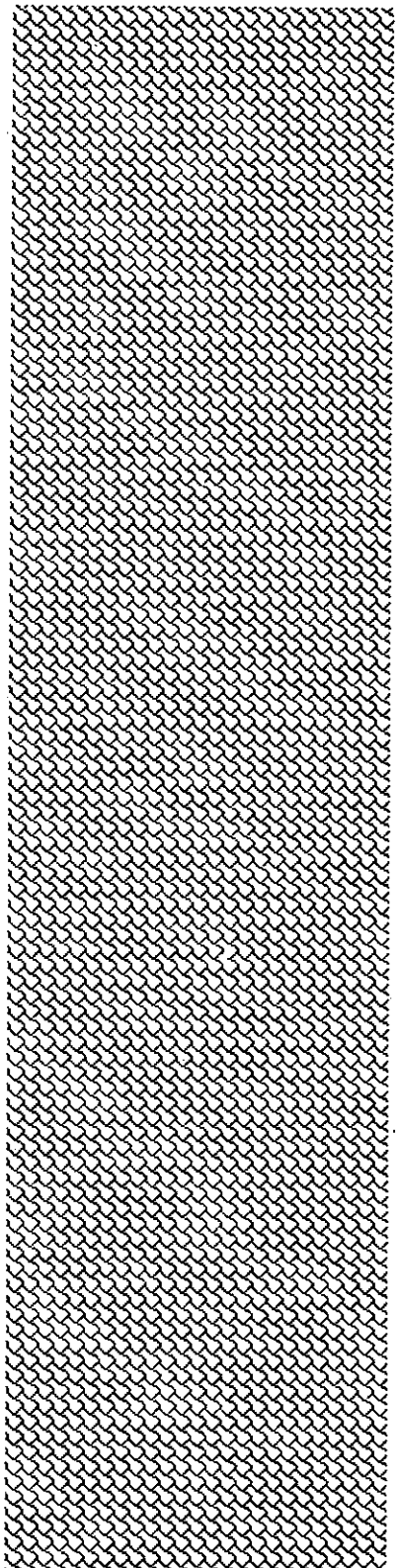
"The queen attains this astonishing capability from a material which remains stored in a small pouch present in her hind part of abdomen. This material is obtained from the male bees. Before dividing the old hive, the new queen takes a flight in the open air and during a dance gets this material from the male bees. Each queen comes back but finally leaves the hive alongwith some worker bees to lay the foundation of a new hive. Still more surprising is the fact that the queen can store the material obtained from males not for months but for years together and uses it only at the time of need. This means that whenever workers and queens are required in the hive, it will lay eggs after fertilizing them. But when males are needed, the stored material is not used and only unfertilized eggs are laid."

"*Dada Abbu* we are unable to understand how a small bee is wise enough to take decision about laying fertilized or unfertilized eggs. Even if we presume that Allah has granted this wisdom to it then this fact is beyond our understanding that the fertilized eggs which were so far producing worker bees have started producting males because they were needed in the hive." Shifa said, expressing her confusion.

"Dear Shifa I fully understand your confusion. But this will be soon removed Insha Allah. One thing that should be kept in mind is that the wisdom is not of the bee's own but refers to the trodden paths of Allah along which bee is asked to act. Allah puts in the heart of worker bees that time has come when they have to make a kind of difference in the food of growing larvae. This differentiation transforms them into queens, workers and males." Explained *Dada Abbu.*

"*Dada Abbu* this appears to us like a magical story in which some magical words transform a man into a parrot." Ameen said laughingly.

Dear son! There is no magic. The creator has laid certain principles. When the bee follows a principle, results are obtained accordingly. The queen lays only fertilized eggs till hive is small and worker



bees feed the emerging larvae with very ordinary food which transforms them into worker bees. When the time comes to divide the hive, the queen lays two types of eggs, fertilized and unfertilized. These are kept in two different cells made by the workers. One similar to those of workers cells but slightly larger and raised and others very large and hanging at the bottom of the hive. The food given to the larvae in both type of cells is also different. It is slightly better in former cells but very special in latter ones. This food is called royl jelly which is prepared with the help of a substance produced in special glands of worker bees. This difference in food makes the former as males and latter as queens.

"*Dada Abbu*! A little while ago you told the honey bees carry out several tasks but you did not give any details. I wonder how worker bees alone might be doing all the works?"

"You have already understood that eggs are laid by the queen while their fertilization is brought about with a material obtained from males. Besides these, there are several other functions also in a hive which are performed by worker bees by distributing them among themselves."

"How they could distribute the work

among themselves?" asked Shifa.

"We say that they distribute work among themselves but really speaking they are following the trodden paths of Allah, during which distribution of work gets automatically done."

"Any how, there must be some system to distribute the work between them." She asked.

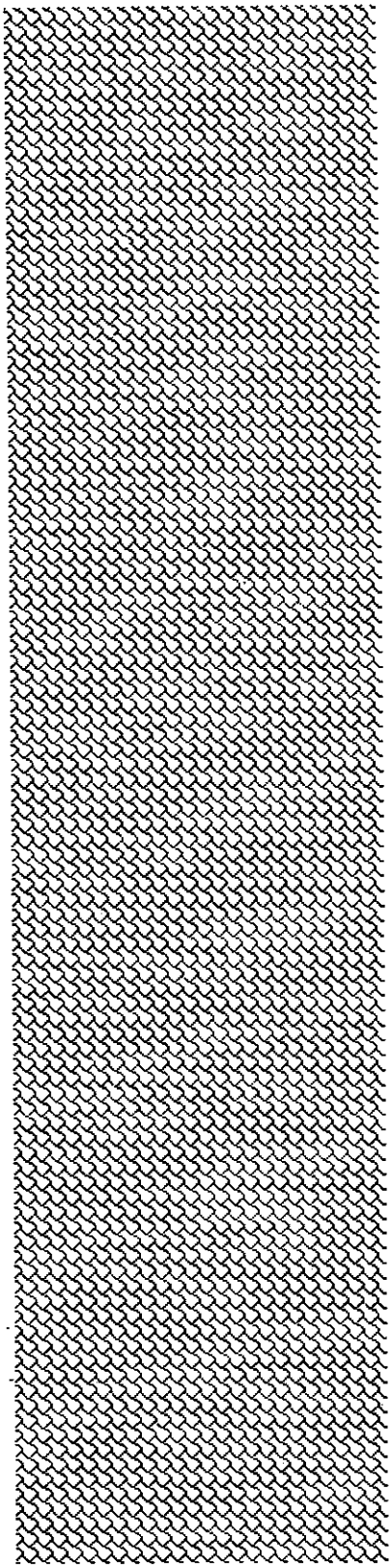
"Distribution of work is completed under the guidance of Allah. He has made a principle that worker bees which are less than twenty days old will not go out of the hive. While remaining inside, they will perform functions like cleaning the cells, feeding the queen and the growing larvae and building new cells in the hive for fresh eggs and larvae."

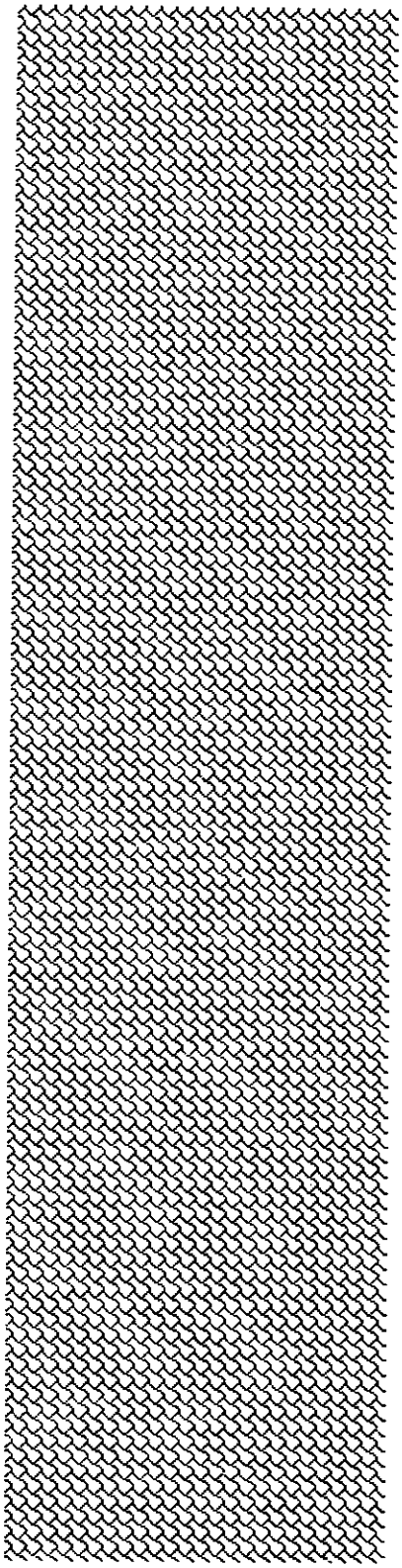
"But how they could build new cells while remaining inside the hive? Would they not require any material for making cells from outside?" asked Ameen.

"Bees have not to bring any material from outside for this work because building of new cells is done with the help of wax which is produced by the bees themselves."

"Really so! *Dada Abba* you are telling such strange things about these bees that are difficult even to think about." Aiman said surprisingly.

"In the belly of twenty days old





bees, there are small slits through which layers of wax start oozing out. Bees take this in their mouths, chew well and with its help make six cornered cells. Each cell is similar in length, breath and depth. By looking at them, it appears as if trained engineer has constructed them. Within six cells, one cell is automatically gets formed."

"*Dada Abbu* you are telling that all cells of the hive are similar but a little while ago you told us that cells of male bees and queen are different in structure." Shifa enquired

"That is also correct. When males and queens are to be produced, Allah directs worker bees to make different cells for them as I explained earlier but each category of cells are similar within themselves."

"*Dada Abbu* this act of bees is really so unusual which could not be done without the guidance of Allah." Shifa admitted. *Dada Abbu* said: "Of course" and continued:

"After twenty days, these bees start going out but not far of during first few days. However, later on they start going to distant places like the old workers and perform functions like searching fruits and flowers, conveying the news to fellow bees, collecting juice and prepare honey,

storing the same in the hive, bringing water and pollen for the growing young larvae."

"A bee can certainly search flowers by going here and there but how to convey to fellow bees about their presence is not understandable." Aiman said with surprise.

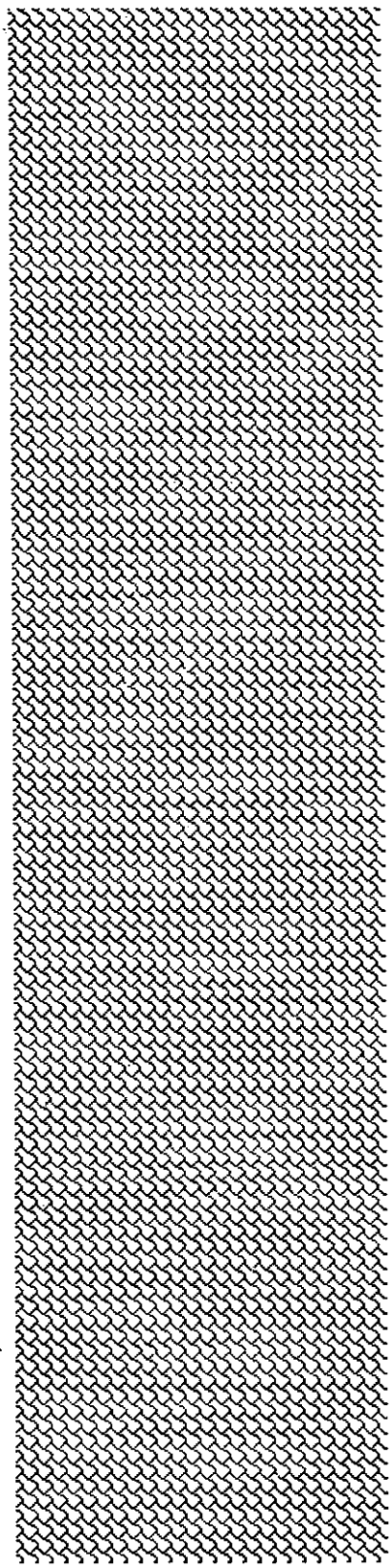
"Out of worker bees, some are particularly meant for searching food. As soon as they find it, they return to the hive and exhibit a dance. Fellow bees understand the dance and reach to the right place for collecting the juice."

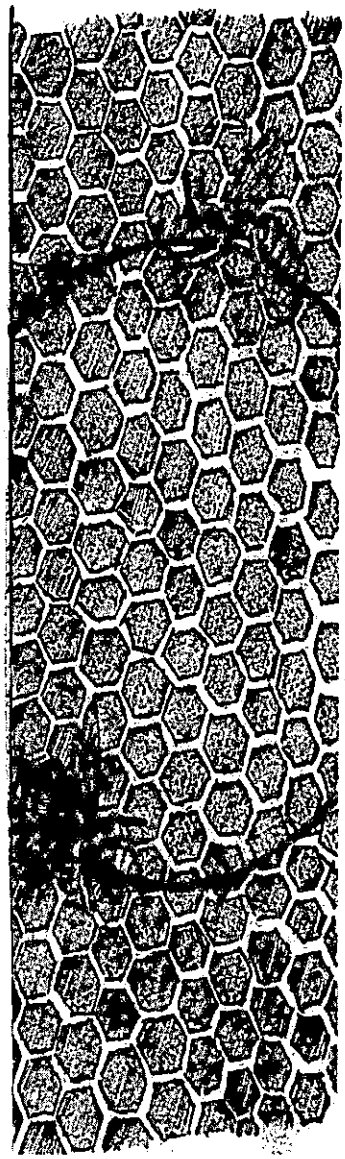
"*Dada Abbu* you are telling us such strange events about honey bee that they appear just like a story. Please tell us how is this bee dance." Aiman asked with great interest.

"Suppose some flowers are present at about fifteen to twenty meters away from the hive. The news giving bee will walk in the hive, making a small circle from up downwards. This is called as a circular dance. Fellow bees understand that the food lies around bee hive, they reach there and get the juice."

"What happens if the food spot lies farther from the hive?" inquired Ameen.

"In that case, the dancing pattern is changed. The dancing bee makes a large circle and also walks along a straight line within the circle which divides the large





circle into two flattened circles placed one upon another. This makes a figure of eight (8). If the dancing bee walks on the central line from below upward, the food lies somewhere in a direction which is towards the sun but if it walks from up downwards, then it is along a line opposite to sun. The fellow bees have to observe an angle which an imaginary line drawn from the sun over the central line will make. They go along that angle towards or against the sun and find the food spot. Is it not strange enough?" said *Dada Abbu* explaining in detail and continued:

"It is much more surprising to know that the dancing bee not only informs about the food spot but also gives an indication with regard to quantity of food present."

"Really! This is extraordinarily surprising." Said Ameen.

"While dancing, the bee goes on moving its abdomen from right to left. Quicker is the abdominal movement, larger will be the amount of juice at that spot. On account of abdominal movement the dance is called a wag-tail dance."

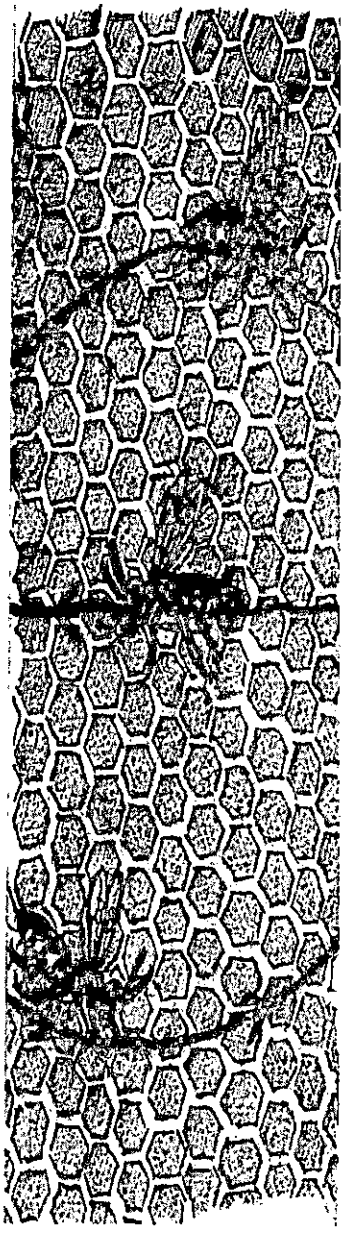
All the three children were listening to the magical talks of the honey bees with great surprise and thinking what wonderful powers have been given to the tiny creatures by the Lord." Thinking this, only

Shifa asked.

"*Dada Abbu* you have yet not told us as to how honey is produced by the bee. The bees that we saw on the roses in the morning were perhaps doing the same work."

"Do bees simultaneously go on drinking this juice also?" Ameen inquired.

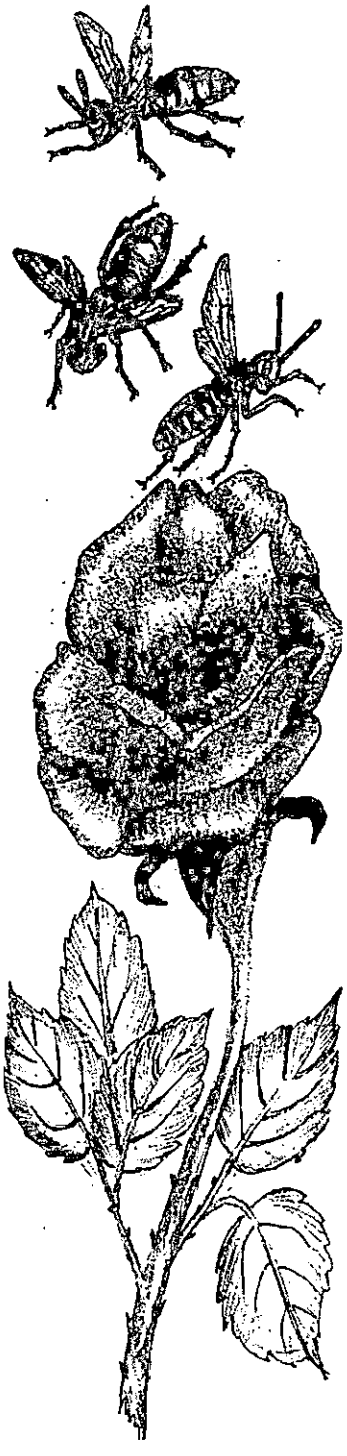
"Bees do not drink the juice. They simply collect it and fly back to their hives. Look at Allah's miraculous ways that during flight, bee's saliva goes on mixing with the juices and by the time bee reaches its hive, the juice gets converted into honey. The bee vomits it in the hive which is immediately collected by the other bees present in the hive and store the same in special cells. Later on, this honey is utilized by larvae, queen and worker bees also."



"What a perfact management! If undisciplined people look at it, it may prove to be embrassing for them." Shifa said

"*Dada Abbu* why did you say that at least some of the bees witnessed by us in the morning must be collecting flower's juice? Do other bees go there for some other purpose also?" Aiman asked.

"Recall, you yourself saw some bees carrying bunches of yellowish powdery substance on their hind legs.



Those bees were collecting pollen grains from the flowers. They have long hairs on their flattened legs withing which pollen grains are entangled. This area is called as pollen basket."

"What bees do with this pollen"? Ameen asked.

"As I told you, this pollen is given to the growing larvae and for making royal jelly, a feed for the queen. Since pollen has more protein, it makes the larvae stronger. For first three days all larvae are fed with pollen, after which the feed is differentiated into simple, better and best in accordance with the bee cast. While the bees collect pollen from flowers, they unknowingly perform a very useful task, for which, human beings are very thankful to them."

"What is that useful work for human beings?" Ameen asked.

"You see flowers have two types of stalks, one are males which produce pollens and the other females which bear fruit with seeds at their bases. These can bear fruits only when pollen comes in contact with the female stalks. Technically this is called pollination. In some plants like papaya, fig and dates, male and female stalks are on separate flowers and hence pollination is difficult. It can be brought about by bees or other insects. Here it is

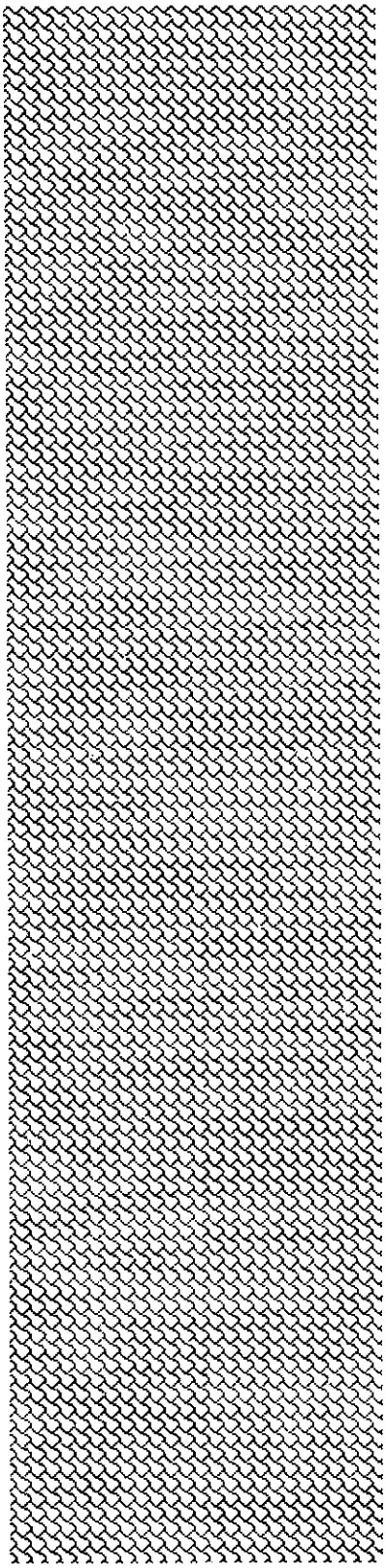
called a crosspollination. The process is essential for fruit setting and chances of crop improvement also increase even in those crops also where both stalks are available on the same flower." *Dada Abbu* explained in detail. After listening this, Shifa said:

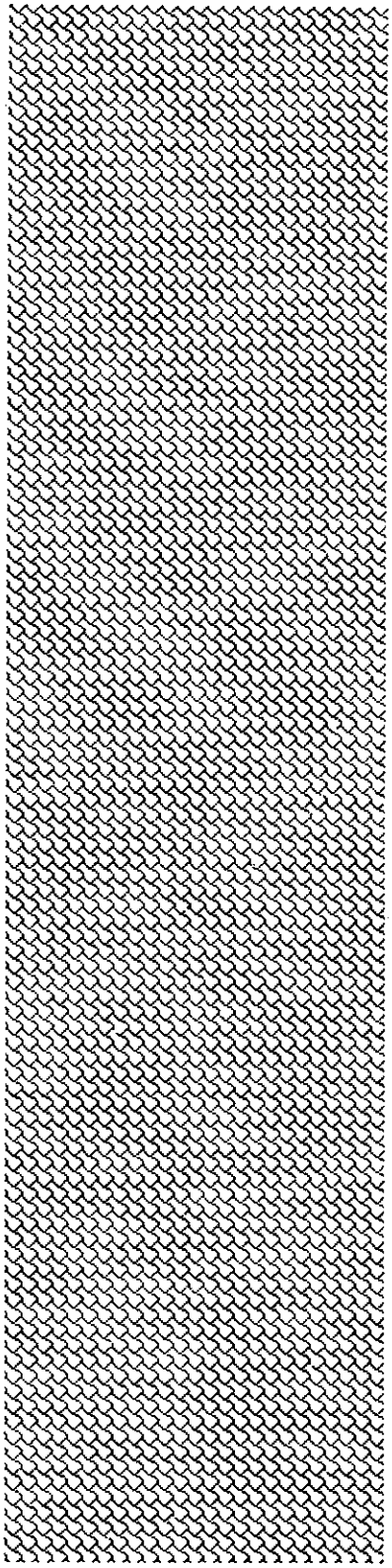
"When both male and female stalks are present on the same flower, pollination will automatically occur, then how is it that cross pollination carried out by bees or insects will improve the crop production?"

"Some times you go to a field and carefully examine a crop. You will find that some plants are more healthier than others. It could be because of any reason. They might be receiving more air, water or fertilizer. If some how pollen of these plants could go to female stalks of other plants and cross pollination occurs, then chances of crop improvement are certainly more. This is the reason that these days farmers are advised to keep honey bee boxes around their fields." *Dada Abbu* made them to understand.

"Really speaking by following the trodden paths of Allah, the bee not only benefits its ownself but extends benefits to human beings also." Admitting the Allah's greatness, Shifa said.

Aiman recalled that Qur'an has mentioned about the syrup of different





colours that comes out of the honey bee. This was yet to be discussed. So she said:

"*Dada Abbu* you have not told us anything about the syrup of different colours that comes out of the honey bee."

"This syrup in nothing but honey only which is formed within the body of honey bee. It brings juices from various flowers, mixes its saliva in it and prepares the honey."

"But why it is called of different coulous?" asked Aiman

"Because honey could be of different colours. Go to a shop and see its different colours. Some are lighter and others darker. Similarly its thickness also varies. Some are thin while others of a thick consistency."

"Why is it like this? Is honey of different bee species are different?" Asked Ameen.

"In fact it depends upon the type of plant and flowers from which the bee extracts the juice. Depending upon the plant, the colour, consistency and taste of honey differs. For instance, honey prepared from the juice of Neem flowers is sour in taste. Jamun honey is of dark colur and thick where as that from Leechi is thin and of very light colour."

"And *Dada Abbu* this is also said that this syrup is a cure for human

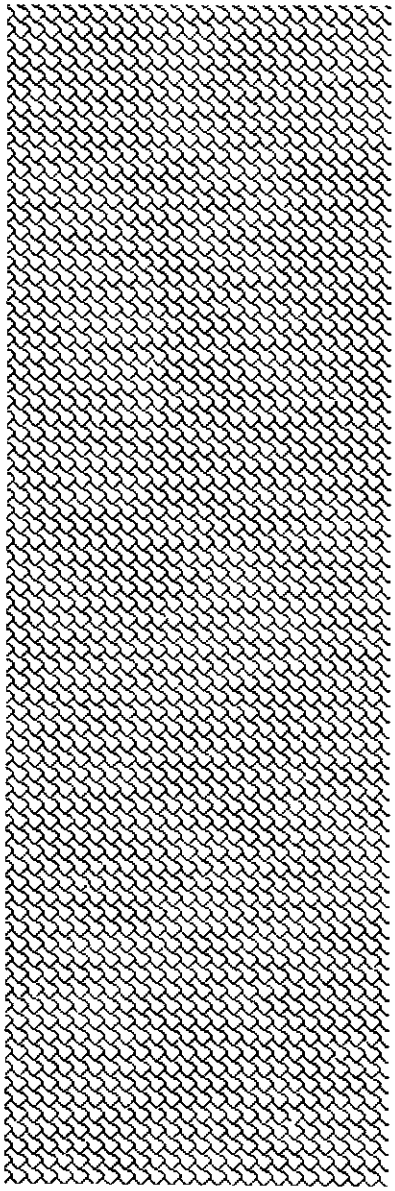
diseases." Recalling morning lesson, said Aiman.

"Undoubtedly honey of different colours is a priceless gift from Allah. Since it contains essence from different plants, it is not only healthy but also cures many diseases as mentioned in Qur'an.[1]

Honey of Srinagar is of a high quality since the bees here extract juice of exotic plants which are not available at other places."

"*Dada Abbu* I have read that our beloved Prophet (PBUH) had a great liking for honey." Said Shifa.

"You are right. According to a Hadith he used to take one bowl of honey dissolved in water every morning. It is also known that he advised a man suffering from diarrhoea to take honey and he got cured.[2] The poison coming out of the sting of a honey bee is a very good remedy for arthritis. Unani practioners consider honey to be an essential part of most of their



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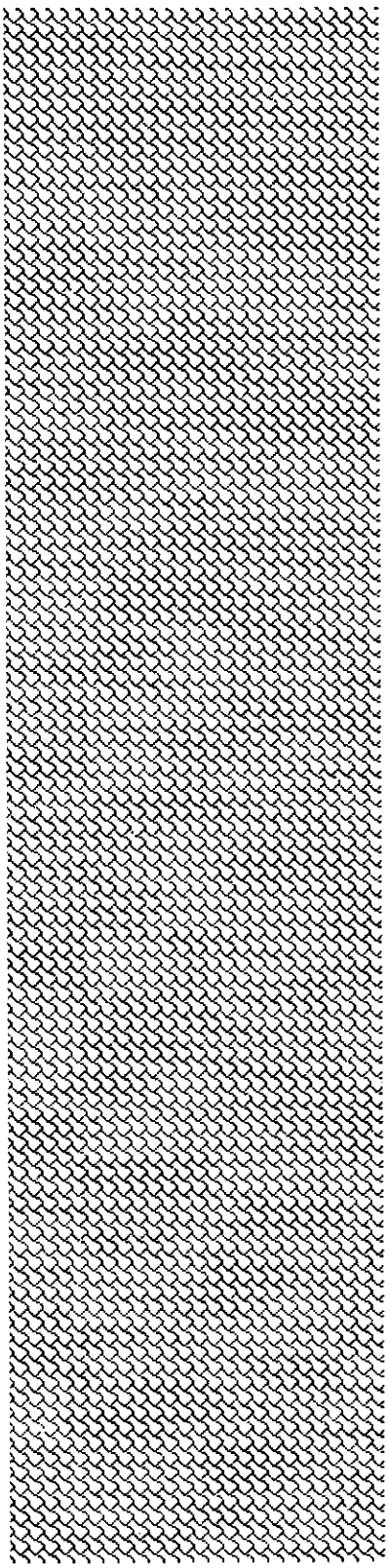
[1] يَخْرُجُ مِنْۢ بُطُوْنِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ اَلْوَانُهٗ فِيْهِ شِفَآءٌ لِّلنَّاسِ

Comes out a syrup of different colours from within the body of bee which is a cure for human being. (Surah Nahal)

[2] a. Allah's Rasool (PBUH) used to take early in the morning one bowl of honey mixed in water. (Ibn-ul-qayyum)

b. Said by Abu Saeed Al Khudri (RTA) that a man came to Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) and told that his brother is suffering from diarrhoea. He told to give him honey. Man again came and told that after drinking honey it increased. He again told him to give honey. He came thrice and when came fourth time he again adviced to him give honey because Allah is true and your borther's stomach is false. When given honey, he got cured. (Bukhari, Muslim)



medicines. Besides honey, the wax produced from the bee hive is also useful in many ways." Told *Dada Abbu.*

"What for the wax may be used?" Asked Ameen.

"Wax obtained from bee hives is used for making lotions and ointments of various types. Besides it may be used for making candles, creams and polishes etc also.

The events and achievements of honey bees were so interesting and amusing that they could not realize the time spent. *Dada Abbu* now looked at his watch and said.

"Well the honey bee has taken quite a lot of time but I am sure the information about it must have clarified not only the Ayah of Qur'an but also the observations which were made by you in the garden." After this every one went to sleep in their rooms. However children were still thinking about honey bee and its astonishing ways. They were thinking about the little creature which was certainly a sign of Allah. Its lord has provided such astonishing capabilities to it which were difficult for them even to imagin. By following the trodden paths of Allah, the bee not only regulates its own life but extands a lot of benefits to mankind also.

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